Towards Interpretive and Empathetic Encounters between Worldviews

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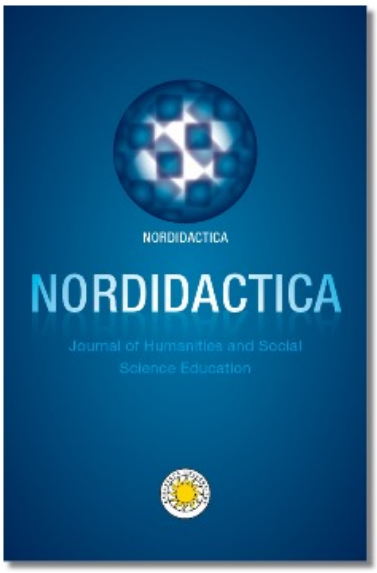

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Towards Interpretive and Empathetic Encounters between Worldviews

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Abstract: Research on young people's attitudes and skills in dealing with religious diversity has been conducted in many surveys, but in real life one is faced with many different types of diversity. How does pupils' preparedness for inter-worldview dialogue develop? This article approaches young people's emotions faced by different types of dissimilarity and skills of asking about others' worldviews. Key theories in analysing the results were Abu-Nimer's stage model of interreligious sensitivity and Jackson's interpretive approach to religious education with a special focus on empathy. The use of pictures when studying emotions revealed that most of the participants experienced non-religious features as pleasant. The pictures depicting the most dissimilarity were experienced as the most negative but also in many cases as interesting. The questions written by the teenagers indicated a wide range of attitudes and skills. Many of them were capable of addressing religious or personal meanings, thus showing an ability to rise above the surface level and seek understanding. An interesting category of questions on the possibility of inter-worldview interaction also emerged. Visual techniques in the research on teenagers' thinking should be further developed because young people today are surrounded by images.

KEYWORDS: INTERRELIGIOUS COMPETENCES, INTER-WORLDVIEW COMPETENCES, INTERFAITH EDUCATION

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Introduction

Acceptance of different religions and worldviews other than one's own is an important goal of religious education in current societies. An increasing readiness to live together in shared communities is needed as global migration increases and, moreover, people need to have more sensitivity to religious diversity. Religions can be seen as a key element of contemporary life and can be central to the cultural identities of many people. They also often play a crucial role in promoting harmony and peace. Respecting cultural and religious diversity is essential to fostering peace and understanding (Final Report, 2006, 11). The importance of knowledge of religious and cultural competences has been underlined both by national curricula and policy reports in recent years (e.g. Jackson, 2014a and 2014b), and research and reflection on young people's attitudes in dealing with religious diversity has been conducted by e.g. ter Avest & al. 2009; Kimanen & Kuusisto, 2017; and Rautionmaa & Kallioniemi, 2017.

However, it is one thing to claim tolerance and acceptance in a questionnaire and another to act accordingly in real life. In real life, after all, one is faced with many different types of diversity and modes of encounter. It is one thing to visit a monastery in a tourist group, another to watch news about religiously based violence, and yet another for a secular and a devout person to have discussions together on worldview matters.

Furthermore, teachers need tools to design dialogue education and to define their pupils' preparedness for inter-worldview encounters. More detailed information is needed in order to understand what kind of encounters are difficult for young people and how inter-worldview dialogue skills evolve. Thus, this study aims to answer the following questions:

How does pupils' preparedness for inter-worldview dialogue develop?

a) What aspects of worldview diversity are more difficult to accept than others?
b) What kind of questions do pupils put to the religious or to the non-religious Other and what kind of approaches enhance mutual understanding?

These questions were approached by projective methods (explained in detail below) in order to gain a wide and rich data.

Key Concepts and Theories

In this article we employ the concepts worldview and inter-worldview dialogue. The idea is to encompass both religious and non-religious convictions and identities. This is especially important in a context like Finland where belief in God is low among young people (Ketola & al., 2016, p. 63, 75). Taking non-religious worldviews into account requires a certain level of adaptation when it comes to both dialogue education methods and research tools, as non-religious alternatives also have to be offered even though non-religious people do not form a uniform group with certain rituals and symbols as religious communities usually do.

Some theorization on the development of interreligious dialogue skills already exists and may be adapted to inter-worldview dialogue. Streib (2001) has observed some

levels in the dialogue skills from non-verbal methods to dialogue as appreciation of the other as a gift and openness for self-critique. The five stages of interreligious sensitivity according to Abu-Nimer (2004), following Bennett's intercultural sensitivity model, are denial, defence, minimization, acceptance and adaptation. The limitation of the stage models is, however, that although they provide tools for classification of approaches, they present the development as a straightforward process. Although individuals may be recognized as showing acceptance for certain worldview differences, they can find themselves in the defence stage when exposed to more striking diversity.

We complement these theories with the concept of empathy. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand what another person is experiencing (Owens Boltz et al., 2015, p. 4). According to Kasl & York (2016, p. 5–6), empathy is both a precondition for whole-person dialogue and a product of it, created in 'a spiral of mutual resonance'. Empathy has both cognitive and affective components, the affective being based on experiential knowing (embodied resonance with phenomena) and the cognitive on propositional knowing (observations and concepts). Therefore, in this study we address both emotions and cognitive processes concerning encountering the Other.

It has been confirmed that empathetic thinking, even trying to imagine the counterpart's perspective produces constructive behaviour in social relationships. Research on empathy shows that certain factors determine whether empathy for social partners will occur. First, some individuals are more prone to empathy than others. Second, the perceived similarity between the observer and the target increases empathy. Third, attempts to take the target's perspective increase the likelihood of empathetic reactions. (Davis, 2009.) These findings provide a justification to investigate the influence of similarity and dissimilarity on the reactions of young people and their willingness to attempt to find out about the perspective of the religious Other.

Context

Finnish society has until relatively recently been very homogenous, and commitment to the Lutheran church has been very strong. However, during the last few decades, religiosity in Finland, like in other Western countries, has changed significantly and has become more diverse than before. Changes in religiosity reflect wider changes in society, and cultural and ideological pluralism has become more visible. But despite recent social changes, the majority of Finnish people (73%) still belong to the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church, and in this respect Finnish society can be regarded as relatively homogenous regarding spiritual issues. The other national church in Finland is the Orthodox Church, but the membership rate is very low (1.1%), whereas a growing number of the Finnish population (24.3%) has no formal membership to any religious community (Statistics Finland, 2015).

The Muslim population is growing all the time, but estimations of the size of the Muslim population vary due to a lack of precise figures concerning Muslim communities. Asylum seekers arriving to Finland in 2015 significantly increased the Muslim population, and rough estimates put the population at over 70,000. According

to the Pew Research Institute (2015), a highly respected sociological institute in the U.S., Finland will have around 190,000 Muslims by 2050.

Although the membership rate of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church has rapidly fallen, there is a growing interest in new religious movements and new forms of spirituality (Utriainen et al., 2015). One of the main features of the change in Finnish religiosity and spirituality is that they are nowadays interpreted very individually and from a very individualistic point of view (Riitaoja, Poulter & Kuusisto, 2010). In Finnish society societal secularization and the loss of institutional religiosity is obvious. Furthermore, post-secularization as the metamorphosis of religion and the increase in religious diversity can easily be seen in Finnish society and culture. Recent research points out that Finnish religiosity is undergoing a remarkable transformation, although it is not disappearing. Empirical studies also show that individual agency has become a major factor in constructing alternative religious identities (Kuusisto, 2011; Pessi, 2013).

The growth of religious diversity in Finland, like in any other open society today, increases the need of inter-worldview competences and education. In the Finnish context, with small faith minorities and the mainstream blending secularism and Lutheranism, it is likely that the participants in our study do not have many articulated experiences of encountering religious diversity. Hence, we required projective methods to trigger reactions.

Method

In researching religious education, projective tests have been used – a very old technique based on classical psychoanalytical theory. The main idea in projective tests is that participants are shown different materials, e.g. pictures, tools or stories that can be interpreted in many different ways. The participants are thought to project their own personality and thoughts when responding to the material. In Finland, Tamminen (1975) developed projective tests as part of his research work about children and youth life questions. Pirinen (1983) has also developed the technique and surveyed previous research in which this technique has been used. He argues that using these techniques can be very useful in researching religious education. Projective techniques may overcome response barriers, i.e. the respondents may express feelings and opinions that are difficult to access by means of direct questions. These kinds of assignments may also be experienced as less difficult and boring to fill in than ordinary questionnaires, and thus may well engage the respondent's imagination. However, it is often difficult to interpret what the projective data means, and there is not much guidance on the design of the projective assignments and how it affects the results (Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000).

We have used pictures partly in order to provide an alternative to verbal construction of responses and thus also involve those teenagers who do not express themselves fluently in writing, and partly in response to the ever-growing impact of images in the current youth culture. The question assignment associated with a picture sought to simulate an encounter between the respondent and the religious (or non-religious)

Other, a situation that many of them had little experience of, and to stimulate their imagination. Other choices in designing the tools and analysing the results will be further discussed below, for both types of assignments separately.

Data and the Participants

The researchers took particular pains to protect the research participants from any possible harm or bias (Kuusisto, 2011). Ethical practices were employed from the earliest planning stages of the design, in the use of instruments, as well as in setting the overall research agenda. An ethical approach was taken to data gathering (e.g. participant and parental consent, opportunities to withdraw from the study), as well as to management, analysis and reporting (e.g. safeguarding participant anonymity; an epistemological approach to the nature of knowledge and power positions). Questions which have components related to worldviews and religions are ethically very sensitive, and this should be noted when making broader conclusions about results. Pupils were asked to participate voluntarily in this survey and they had an opportunity to discontinue their participation at any stage of the survey (see Kuusisto & Kallioniemi, 2018).

The survey was conducted in four schools in the capital region in autumn 2014. The respondents (N=558) were aged 15–17; 55% were girls, and 45% boys. The survey was conducted as an online questionnaire. Participation in the survey was voluntary for pupils, and the questions were filled in during a lesson supervised by a teacher. Written consent was required from the pupils' parents. The teachers at the four schools contacted the parents and ensured that only those pupils with parental consent responded to the survey, but were not asked to provide numbers of those who refused. However, the number of Islamic RE pupils was significantly lower than the number of pupils in RE groups contacted. Either parental consent was not given, a high percentage of the pupils were absent from the class, or they were not willing to participate.

There were two background questions that revealed the religious affiliations of the participants. First, they were asked which religious education or secular ethics class they attended. Lutheran RE was attended by 90.9% of the participants, secular ethics by 2.6%, Islamic RE by 1.6%, Orthodox RE by 3.6%, and other (Catholic or Jewish) by 1.7%. Eight pupils did not answer this question. The distribution does not correspond to that in the capital region or in Finland in general (i.e. Lutheran 88.8%, ethics 6.3%, Islamic 2.1%, Orthodox 1.5, other 0.5%, Education Statistics Finland, 2017). This reflects the fact that religious diversity is not evenly distributed in the capital region (i.e. the participant schools were not among the most diverse ones). The dominance of Lutheran RE pupils led to a situation where calculating the differences between the different groups was not statistically relevant.

Another question was: "How strongly do you feel affiliated to the following religions or convictions?" The results can be found in Table 1 below. This approach allows the participants to express fluid and mixed religious identities, rather than choosing a fixed, exclusive identity (Kuusisto & Kallioniemi 2016).

TABLE 1.

Degree of religious affiliation of the participants

	Lutheran Christianity		Orthodox, Catholic or other minority church		Muslims		Non-religious people		Other	
1 not at all	13.7%	75	78.8%	412	92.6%	484	56.1%	292	82.1%	426
2	14.8%	81	12.2%	64	4.0%	21	18.4%	96	10.2%	53
3	24.3%	133	4.0%	21	1.7%	9	9.4%	49	2.9%	15
4	25.3%	139	1.9%	10	0.0%	0	8.4%	44	2.5%	13
5 strongly	21.9%	120	3.1%	16	1.7%	9	7.7%	40	2.3%	12
	100.0%	548	100.0%	523	100.0%	523	100.0%	521	100.0%	519

The results show that the degree of religious affiliation towards Lutheran Christianity was mostly lukewarm, i.e. between the two extremities. Islam was the least identified with, over 90% claiming that they did not identify with being Muslim. However, lukewarmth did not seem to describe the strength of affiliation of the Muslim pupils, as the number of strongly affiliated participants seems to correspond to that of Islamic RE pupils. Strongly or fairly strongly non-religious participants represented only 15% of the total, but on the other hand only roughly half of the participants were not at all non-religious. Interestingly, other religions and convictions outnumbered the Muslims.

A coding frame was needed to analyse the questions. The first coding frame was created by the first author. It was modified during several rounds of the coding of the data and during discussions among the authors, and these discussions were influenced by the theoretical starting points described above. When the final coding frame was agreed on, 20% of the data was first coded by both researchers independently. After that, the solidity of the interpretations was examined and the KAPPA value was calculated. It was in almost all cases over .85, which showed that the results were very reliable (Robson, 1993).

Frequencies and percentages of data were calculated. The effect of gender and age on pupils' choice of pictures was then calculated, but no statistically significant influences were detected.

Results

Emotions Aroused by Images

Emotions are individually felt but rooted in interpersonal processes. In a way, they evaluate the individual's environment for situations that may affect their well-being (La

Guardia, 2009; Frijda, 2008). Therefore, we assume that positive emotions constitute a better ground for inter-worldview encounters than negative emotions. Consequently, we also assume that those religious or non-religious topics that arouse negative emotions are more difficult to encounter and reaching the stage of acceptation with them is more demanding.

The participants were asked to choose a picture that made them feel pleasant or unpleasant, or angry and irritated. Finally, they were asked to pick an image of people who they would like to ask questions from. There were nine pictures (Figure 1.) to choose between, but the participants could also write down which religion-related issues would arouse the mentioned emotions. The pictures were chosen in autumn 2014 from among pictures that at that point could be found in the internet under Creative Commons license for non-commercial use.

We assumed that the perceived similarity of certain people would produce pleasant emotions as this increases empathy (Davis, 2009). Hence, we sought to provide pictures that the participants could identify with as well as pictures with views that are not ordinary in the Finnish public space. We also included pictures depicting religion in both distant and familiar contexts in order to test the impact of that factor. Two of the pictures (A and F) contain an encounter between different faiths, and they were included in order to test how encounter as an idea would be experienced.

There are certain basic emotions, although the field is somewhat contested (La Guardia, 2009). We decided to include the two main affects, pleasantness and unpleasantness, as well as irritation/anger in order to find out whether there is a difference between more active and passive emotions. The fourth assignment, choosing a picture in order to pose questions, can be interpreted as interest or a willingness to approach.

TABLE 2.

The contents of the pictures

Picture	Content	Source
A	Buddhist monks	Darren On The Road, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhist_monks_collecting_alms,_Laos.jpg
B	Orthodox procession in Helsinki	Whoiswho, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ikonin_ristisaatto.jpg
C	Sikh Vaisakhi holiday in Canada	Joel Friesen, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sikhs_on_the_move!.jpg
D	Purim festivities in a school	http://www.flickr.com/photos/jewishagencyforisrael/8261183918/
E	Spanish Holy Week procession	Luis Fernández García, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Capuchones2.jpg
F	Conversation between Jewish and Muslim women	U.S. Embassy Jerusalem https://www.flickr.com/photos/usembassyta/6515808829/
G	Indian women in water	rajkumar1220, http://www.fotopedia.com/items/flickr-4041565839
H	Person sitting on a bench	Kimmo Hurri, http://kimmonkamera.blogspot.fi/2012_06_01_archive.html
I	Lutheran confirmation	SeppVei, https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiedosto:Konfirmaatio_Karjasillan_kirkossa.JPG

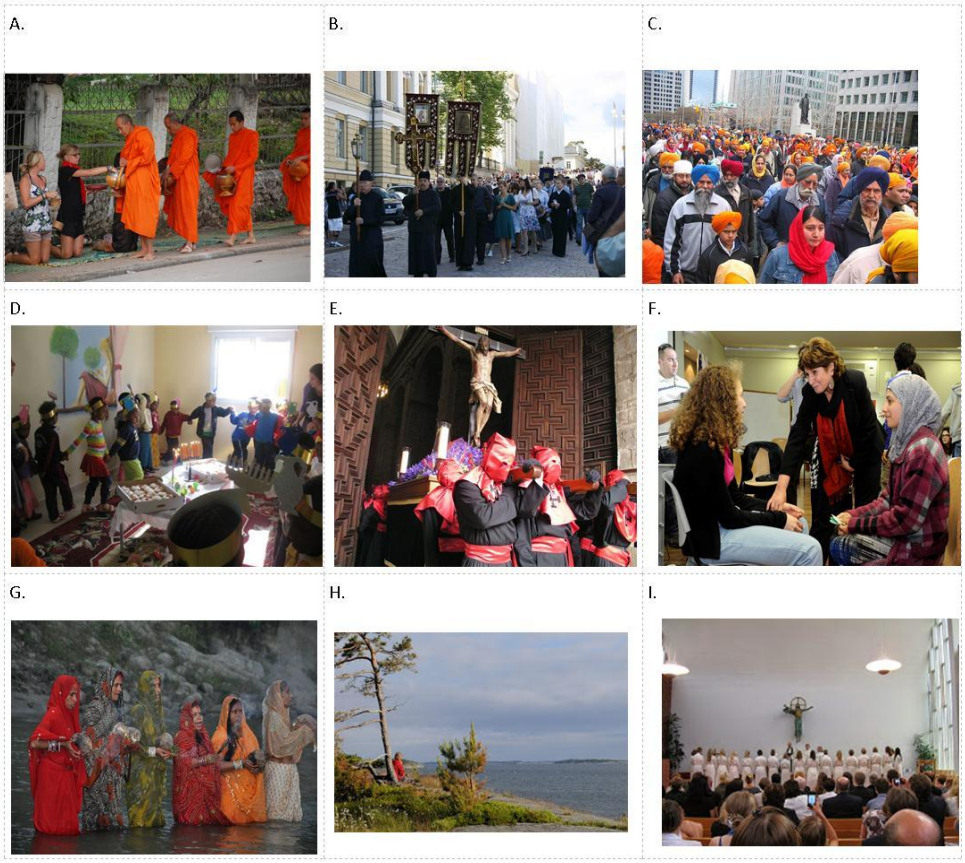

FIGURE 1.

The pictures used in the questionnaire

The results are given in Table 3. The percentages show that the encounter between different worldviews (A and F) did not arouse any emotions whatsoever. Likewise, the distance or familiarity of context did not affect the distribution of the choices. Instead, we chose to examine the recognizability of a religious ritual as a factor in our analysis. This was due to the fact that the most pleasant emotions were aroused by the pictures H, which was intended to be a non-religious option with a possibility to interpret it as a spiritual experience of nature, and D, the Purim festival that could have been identified with a birthday party or similar occasion. The other factor was, as mentioned above, the perceived dissimilarity of the people in the picture. Dissimilarity, in these pictures, can be compared by examining the clothing of the persons. The most dissimilar are pictures C, E and G. Pictures B, F and possibly A contain both Western everyday clothing and some other pieces of religious garment. Picture H depicts only everyday clothing, the hats in picture D can be interpreted in non-religious terms, and the white albs in picture I are probably familiar for the majority of the respondents from school services and other church visits.

TABLE 3.

Emotions aroused by pictures depicting religions and worldviews

	Pleasant feeling		Unpleasant feeling		Irritation/anger		Questions (interest)	
A	6.6%	36	3.4%	18	6.8%	32	25.7%	135
B	1.8%	10	7.4%	40	9.7%	46	4.4%	23
C	1.1%	6	21.3%	114	19.0%	90	7.8%	41
D	17.7%	97	1.7%	9	3.2%	15	9.9%	52
E	1.8%	10	34.3%	184	17.4%	82	10.8%	57
F	5.7%	31	3.2%	17	4.6%	22	6.5%	34
G	1.1%	6	17.1%	92	8.9%	42	23.9%	126
H	47.4%	259	1.9%	10	0.6%	3	7.2%	38
I	10.2%	56	3.2%	17	4.6%	22	3.8%	20
sth.else	6.6%	36	6.5%	35	25.2%	119		
	100.0%	547	100.0%	536	100.0%	473	100.0%	526

The religious ritual is not clearly recognizable in pictures C, D, F and H. The latter two pictures did not contain a religious ritual in reality, in C (the Sikh procession) there are no signs of a feast like decorations or specific movements, and in D (Jewish children celebrating Purim with masquerade hats and a ring dance) decorations and dancing are easily interpreted as non-religious. Among these four pictures, H (a person enjoying the natural environment) and D were the main pictures to arouse a pleasant feeling, whereas F (an encounter between a girl wearing hijab and two females without a headscarf) did not arouse any feelings, and C was among the top pictures related to unpleasant feelings and irritation/anger. Thus, it may be concluded that pictures with no recognizable religious ritual and with similar people were perceived in the most positive sense. The part dissimilarity (the headscarf) in picture F possibly prevented it from being experienced in a pleasant way, but the absence of religious ritual together with distinct dissimilarity (colourful turbans and headscarves) in picture C created a threatening association. This was probably strengthened by the setting where the people are marching as a crowd in a public space. Some questions in the next assignment also revealed some interpretations: ‘Why do you look so angry?’ ‘Are you in a demonstration?’

On the other hand, religious ritual was recognizable in pictures A, B, E, G and I. In terms of similarity, pictures E and G were the most dissimilar, A and B were both similar and dissimilar, and picture I was probably identified with by the majority of the respondents. With these pictures, the reactions were more negative than with the pictures without religious ritual. The Lutheran confirmation picture aroused the most pleasant feelings, but only for barely over 10% of the respondents. The Orthodox procession, on the contrary, aroused irritation/anger for approximately the same proportion of participants. It is interesting to note that the other picture depicting a procession also was interpreted as a threat. The pictures E (Spanish Holy Week procession with masked characters) and G (Hindu women in the water) gained the highest proportions of unpleasant feelings, but G was not perceived as a threat. Picture

A (a Western-looking women kneeling before Buddhist monks) did not arouse strong emotions, but it was the top choice for questions. Likewise, the other top choices for the question assignment were from this group, E and G. They contained a clearly recognizable religious ritual and distinctive dissimilarity among the people in them. Thus, it may be concluded that the presence of a religious ritual both aroused some degree of negative feelings but also an interest that could not to the same extent be associated with the pictures without a recognizable religious ritual. The interest also grew along with the dissimilarity of the persons in the picture. The frequent choice of the Buddhist picture may reflect a similar fascination with Buddhism that has been observed in Sweden (Brömssen, 2016, p. 120).

Beyond this analysis it can be noted that the choice of pictures in the pleasant feeling assignment reveals that most of the participants did not associate positive emotions with religious motives. Over 70% of the participants chose a picture with no clearly recognizable religiosity. This shows that the strangeness of religiosity was experienced emotionally. The fact that even the Lutheran confirmation picture was chosen only by 10% shows that the respondents were not engaged with Lutheran Christianity on the emotional level, although engagement on some other level made most of them choose alternatives from strong to mediocre affiliation.

The difference between the unpleasant feeling and the irritation/anger did not prove to be clear. These emotions seem to form a class of negative emotions. The main differences are that the Hindu women in the water did not arouse irritation/anger but only unpleasantness and that the top choice was ‘something else’. Somehow the aspect of threat was absent in the picture of Hindu women compared to processions and masked faces. The unpleasant feeling may have had to do with a general feeling of confusion when facing a strange religious ritual (for confusion in encountering worldview diversity, see Kimanen & Kuusisto, 2017).

As to the option ‘something else’, it was mostly used to point out that nothing aroused irritation/anger. In this question, five participants even criticized the question by answering ‘I am not angry’ or similar things. Other respondents wrote things not related to religion, while only 17 participants mentioned religious issues. These issues varied from religiously based violence or discrimination to too strict rules and converting other people. In conclusion, although some were irritated by the mere existence of religious behaviour, many rejected hatred by simply refusing to choose a picture.

When choosing a picture to pose questions, a solution that avoided encountering a different worldview was to choose a picture that illustrated one’s own religious tradition. The participants’ religious education or secular ethics subject was examined in those pictures that depicted worldviews that are well established in Finland, namely B (Orthodox procession), F (Islamic hijab), and I (Lutheran confirmation). Also, choosing the non-religious picture H might be a way to avoid an encounter with a religious person, but whether or not choosing the picture as a Lutheran pupil might be regarded as an encounter between religious and non-religious stances is a complicated issue. However, these pictures were the least common choices, and the Orthodox procession was not chosen by any Orthodox religious education pupils. The picture with

a girl wearing a hijab was chosen by only one Islamic religious education pupil, but those who chose the Lutheran confirmation picture were all Lutheran religious education pupils (n=20). Recognizing that those who attended secular ethics classes were not the only non-religious respondents, the religious affiliation of those who chose picture H was examined. Only 6 of them felt strongly or fairly strongly affiliated to 'non-religious people'. Thus, there were 27 (5.1%) respondents who avoided an inter-worldview encounter altogether in this assignment, namely those 20 Lutherans who chose the confirmation picture, 1 Muslim who chose the hijab picture and 6 non-religious participants who chose a non-religious picture.

Questions to the Religious Other

The participants were asked to write three questions to the people in the picture that they had chosen in the previous assignment. Of course, this assignment does not demonstrate how they would act in a real-life situation, but it does indicate their dialogic language skills. The responses contained 0–3 questions. Some of the respondents, however, posed questions with more than one of the pictures, not only to the one they had chosen previously. Blank spaces, unintelligible words and responses like 'I don't know' were considered a failure to answer, and were omitted from the analysis. However, the high rate (23.1%) of failure to answer can be regarded as a sign of a lack of dialogue skill, possibly also a sign of negative attitudes.

The coding frame was constructed starting from the data and finding a suitable theory to describe the different types of questions. First, questions containing Abu-Nimer's (2004) stages of denial and defence were detected. Second, there were questions about the symbolic or social meaning of the ritual or some detail in the picture. Because these approaches are not covered by the Abu-Nimer model, they were attached to Jackson's (1997) interpretive approach. In fact, the approach is intended as a tool in religious education, but we adopt the idea that young people should be guided into an interpretive process when encountering religious diversity (e.g. p. 110). Furthermore, we employ the idea that there are three levels at which a religious way of life could be examined, namely the individual level, the religious community level, and the wider religious tradition level (p. 65–66), although in the questions the last two were mostly merged.

Questions concerning the individual level can also be connected to the idea of empathetic perspective taking as a fruitful position for inter-worldview encounter. According Jackson, people easily convince themselves that they have empathized with others when in reality they have not done so. Empathy does not free one from one's own presumptions or prejudices. However, Jackson regards interpretation as a necessary condition for empathy in its full sense (Jackson, 1997, p. 46). Interpretation might have the power to reduce presumptions and widen horizons.

The coding frame took the form of a scale from negative stances through avoiding addressing religion and informative questions to interpretative stances. The interpretative stances were considered the deepest in the sense that they sought information on the meaning of a religious rite or related issues instead of mere context.

The responses were coded as wholes. Certain key characteristics were looked for, and they were assumed to reveal something central in the participant's attitudes or dialogue skills, so that the whole response could be coded accordingly. Thus, although the response could contain three questions that would have been coded differently as separate questions, the whole response was given only one code according to the key characteristic. Moreover, the key characteristics had a certain hierarchy so that coding was also possible in cases where two or more key characteristics were identified. Codes 2 and 3 contained responses with no key characteristics, so the code was given only when the response included only one type of question. The hierarchy is presented in Table 4. The numbering of the codes also represents an idea that number 1 contains the least favourable approaches for inter-worldview exchanges, and number 6 the deepest level.

TABLE 4.

Coding of the questions

Code	Key characteristic	Content	Hierarchy
1	Negative stance	At least one question with negative stance	Always coded 1
2		Only questions unrelated to religion	
3		Only informative questions	
4	Possibility of dialogue	At least one question about the possibility of dialogue	Coded 4 if no negative stance
5	Religious implication	At least one question about religious implication	Coded 5 if no other key characteristics
6	Personal implication	At least one about personal implication	Coded 6 if no negative stance or possibility of dialogue.

TABLE 5.

Frequencies and proportions of the codes.

Code	N	%
1	77	17.8 %
2	15	3.5 %
3	86	19.9 %
4	18	4.1 %
5	142	32.8 %
6	95	21.9 %
	433	100.0 %

The distribution of the codes is displayed in Table 5. The first key characteristic was a negative stance. It included many kinds of negative or non-sensitive responses: insulting questions like 'Why do you have stupid headwear?' and 'What is the point of that?', scornful questions like 'If everything is possible, is it possible that something is impossible?', and questions that contained negative assumptions about the other's religion or worldview like 'Don't you feel bad about…?', 'Do you feel oppressed?', 'Are you in a demonstration?' or 'Would you like to change religion?' Aggressive responses that did not contain questions were also coded as a negative stance. Mostly, these questions represented defence in Abu-Nimer's (2004) stage model.

The percentage of responses containing a negative stance was fairly high if compared with, for instance, a survey in Kimanen & Kuusisto (2017), where around 10% of the responses were 'defensive'. Admittedly, negative stance was defined broadly here.

Code 2 meant that the respondent had only written questions unrelated to religion without showing aggressive or scornful attitudes, like 'How old are you?', 'What is your name?' 'What did you have for lunch?' This category was small, but these responses could not be fitted into any other code. Writing only non-religious questions might be interpreted as avoiding inter-worldview issues. These questions represent Abu-Nimer's (2004) stage of denial. In Abu-Nimer's classification, denial comes before defence as denial has the least connection with the other. However, we decided to change the order because non-aggressive and non-assuming questions form a more favourable ground for inter-worldview communication.

In the responses coded 3, all the questions were simple informative questions like 'What is your religion?', 'Where are you?', 'What is your religion like' or 'What are you doing?' Questions like this showed interest towards the Other but only on a surface level and lacked interpretation. In all, there were numerous simple informative questions in the data, but in many cases they paved the way for deeper questions and in some they preceded scornful or aggressive ones. Because we sought in this study to identify the stages of inter-worldview dialogue skills, orientation with everyday information was not considered a key character. However, code 3 was the third most common among the responses amounting to almost one fifth.

The second key characteristic was an interest in the possibility of dialogue, code 4. These kinds of responses were few, but they depicted interesting features in the respondents' thinking. On the one hand they showed courage to address sensitive issues, on the other hand they revealed fears about religious people's relationships towards other religions. Questions concerning the possibility of inter-worldview dialogue included: 'Do you have friends from other religions?', 'How do you relate to other religions?' or 'May I join you in giving food to the monks even if I'm not of the same religion?' This study was not built on the assumption of tensions or lack of empathy between in-group and out-group members as a clear in-group membership was not required or constructed in the survey. However, the questions show that at least some respondents constructed religious people in the pictures as out-group and possibly as rejective towards other groups or faiths.

The third key characteristic was religious implication, like 'Why do you wear masks?', 'Are you celebrating?', 'What has happened?' or 'What does that have to do

with your religion?' This characteristic was regarded as an interpretive stance, according to Jackson a necessary condition for empathy (Jackson, 1997, p. 46). Roughly one third of the respondents were able to address the meaning of the event in one way or another.

The fourth key characteristic represented perspective-taking or empathy, namely the personal implications of the event in the picture or the religion or worldview more broadly. Responses contained questions like 'What does your religion mean to you?', 'Why do you believe?' or 'Are Muslims having a hard time during Ramadan?' This code was given to over one fifth of the responses, but in practice it contained a wide range of questions.

In one third of the responses coded as personal implication empathy was represented in very simple questions like 'Are you having fun?' or 'How do you feel?' These kinds of questions among teenagers may also be interpreted as a conversational move like 'How are you?', and thus not require deep emotional engagement. In fact, the question 'Are you having fun' was sometimes included in the responses containing negative stance and thus expressed scorn rather than empathy.

Other questions were somewhat deeper. Many of them touched upon the person's reasons for their beliefs and their contentment with their religion. They reflect the idea of religion as an informed choice and also more generally the confusion many young people in secularized societies seem to experience about somebody having religious convictions (Kimanen & Kuusisto, 2017; Brömssen, 2017). However, these questions indicate a willingness to gain understanding and the skill to articulate that perplexity.

There were also some (15) responses that showed well-established reflection skills (12 of them concerned picture A, Buddhist monks). Some wrote a whole series of three well-articulated questions on emotions and personal experiences like 'What is life in a monastery like? Have you got negative or positive feedback from the people you have asked for alms? Is it hard to live as a monk?' In one case the response contained criticism: 'The life of the monks in picture A shows that they live on really few necessities. 1. Isn't one's own health more important than what one believes in? 2. Personally, I prefer to e.g. pray with my family. Don't you miss your own family? 3. If you wake up at 5 a.m. and half of the day is prayer, where is the joy of life, and leisure? Or rest at least?' This response shows negative presuppositions on the one hand, but on the other hand it sincerely and resolutely seeks understanding, using argumentative rather than insulting language. In fact, one response that was coded 1 contained both insulting language and a question about personal experience in religious language: 'What are you doing? What is the point in that? What guided you into a deep belief?' These were rare examples but they show that the capability of making an empathetic inquiry is not always a sign that a person never uses insulting language or does not have negative presuppositions.

Conclusion

The use of pictures revealed that most of the participants experienced non-religious features as pleasant. In other words, they were not emotionally engaged in religions to the extent indicated by their self-assessed religious affiliation. Religious rituals by people not similar to the respondents aroused negative emotions, but also interest, whereas strong dissimilarity caused only negative emotions. The latter was, however, represented only by one picture in this data, and there were probably also other features that caused threat and unpleasantness.

According to the findings, it seems that the more dissimilarity there is in people or in their habits like dressing, the more demanding it is to encounter them without presuppositions. Religious ritual seems to constitute one important aspect in this dissimilarity, something that perplexes – but also creates a frame of interpretation that leads the mind away from negative assumptions like interpreting a procession as a demonstration. However, more research is needed to explore this further.

Methodologically, visual techniques in the research on teenagers' thinking should be further developed. The findings show that the use of pictures may help young participants to express feelings that they would not necessarily have the words to describe. In addition to projective techniques, pictures might be used to map young people's visual landscapes and social orders produced by pictures in the media that young people consume.

The questions written by the teenagers indicated a wide range of attitudes and skills. Complementing the theory of interreligious sensitivity (Abu-Nimer, 2004) with Jackson's (1997) ideas of interpretative approach and theories of empathy (e.g. Kasl & York 2016) led us to form a continuum from negative stance through avoidance of religious issues, informative questions and the possibility of dialogue to religious implication and personal implication.

A comparably (cf. Kimanen & Kuusisto, 2017; Josza, 2009) high proportion of responses expressed negative attitudes. At the same time, half of the respondents were capable of addressing religious or personal meanings, thus showing an ability to rise above the surface level and seek understanding. However, defining personal meaning in a deeper sense proved to be challenging in the questions assignment.

There are some implications for the RE practice in any context where inter-worldview understanding is a goal. First, if inter-worldview dialogue education wants to start with easy challenges, learners should be introduced with targets that are somewhat similar to them. However, the unpleasant emotions possibly attached to dissimilar people and religious rituals should also be addressed, and learners should be introduced to them in an interpretive spirit. Second, teachers could guide their pupils in the art of posing questions by encouraging and teaching them how to ask about religious and personal implication. Together with the pursuit of interpretation the pursuit of empathy could achieve perspective-taking in its full sense.

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